The Maharshi

Jan/Feb 2002 Vol.12, No.1

MEDITATION

by S. S. Cohen

Meditation means many things to many individuals and ranges from quiet brooding on a concept or an ideal to the beatitude of the highest spiritual contemplation. But in the *sadhana* propounded by the Maharshi it strictly means, whatever the method, the attempt to still the thinking faculty, the perpetually-surging waves of the mind, in order that the calm ocean of pure awareness, from which they rise and on which they move, may be experienced.

To beginners this mind control appears to be a formidable feat, yet the Master encourages them to go ahead and practice — at all events to make a beginning. He constantly dins into us the inspiring notion that we are already Self-realized and that, if we are not aware of it, the obstruction to that awareness should be removed by investigation — *vichara* — which is as logical as it is simple.

To hear it direct from him, this "Self-knowledge", rather the way to Self-knowledge, is "...the easiest thing there is" ("Atma Vidya"); but, judging from the questions constantly asked of him, and later of his disciples, there appears to be the need for much spade work before its central idea takes a firm hold on the seeker. The Master's obvious meaning seems to be that, even apart from the psychological efficacy of the *vichara* proper, preoccupying the mind with a single theme to the exclusion of all others, if doggedly practiced, will not fail to produce beneficial results. It will tend to reduce the oscillations of the thinking processes, and thus render the mind amenable to concentration on the supremely important work which is to follow, which by itself is a splendid achievement. Finding the answer to the query "Who am I?" is not the immediate burden of the practice in the beginning. Stability and fixity of the restless, mercurial mind is the first aim, and this can be achieved by constant practice and by frequently pulling oneself back to the subject of the meditation whenever the mind strays away.

When the mind has attained an appreciable degree of concentration, which means of depth, it will be time to think of the answer. Some *sadhakas* are fortunate enough to begin with a mind already accustomed to concentration, either naturally, or by training, or through intense fervor, so that they are able to go straight to the application of the *vichara*, and thus make a more or less rapid progress, according to the intensity of their determination, without much strain. For the Master tells us that mental calmness, that is, a controlled mind, is essential for a successful meditation.

The next idea in the *vichara* seems to be that wherever, and for however long, one may search for the answer in meditation, one will certainly not find it in the physical body; for no part of it is intelligent enough to stand the test of analysis or answer the call. Even if the meditator takes his body as a whole and confers on it his name, say, Krishna or Peter, sooner or later he will discover that it is only his mind which is responsible for this as well as all other thoughts and sensations. Thus diligent search and keen observation eventually lead to the mind as the perceiver, desirer and enjoyer of a world which is entirely its own thoughts; for the mind cognizes naught but its own ideas.

The final idea, one gathers, refers to the most vital stage of the *vichara*, when the foregoing fact has become a settled conviction and the seeker unabatingly continues his inquiry, this time no longer into the insentient body, but into the very nature of the

mind, from which he has discovered the 'I-thought' to have arisen. Meditation has by then taken a firm grip and has turned from an erstwhile painful and apparently fruitless effort to a joyful, eagerly-looked-forward-to performance, which can no longer be abandoned or even slackened. The thinking processes have by now considerably slowed down and with it, naturally, the restlessness of the mind. Profound peace and inner joy impel more frequent and longer meditation, which in turn reduces thinking still further, till the moment of full maturity is reached, when all of a sudden all thoughts completely cease, and the meditator, the 'I', having nothing to disturb or preoccupy him, spontaneously finds himself in his pure Being, which is the Absolute State or Substratum. This is what the second and third *sutras* of Patanjali's Yoga mean by saying: "Yoga is the suppression of the *vritti* (modifications of the thinking principle). Then the seer abides in himself."

And what is that Self in actual experience? Sri Bhagavan tells us that it is the Light which ever shines in the Cave of the Heart as the flame of the Consciousness 'I - I' — the eternal and blissful Sat-chit-ananda. This is the answer to the *vichara* and its fulfillment. The 'I', which has carried out a determined and protracted search into its own nature, has at long last found itself to be not other than the Pure Mind, the immaculate Being, which is eternally wrapped in blissful stillness. This is *Turiya*, the Fourth State, or *Samadhi*. There remains nothing more for one to achieve but to consolidate this state into the permanent experience of *Sahaja Nirvikalpa*, which is the Great Liberation.

Sadhakas take courage from the personal assurance of Sri Maharshi and the testimony of those who have found the Ultimate Peace, and relentlessly continue their efforts however sterile these may at first appear to be, strong in the belief of the descent of the Divine Grace on their endeavor to crown them with the greatest of all crowns, that of Supreme Enlightenment.

Bhagavan: Patanjali's first sutras are indeed the climax of all systems of Yoga. All yogas aim at the cessation of the vritti (modification of the mind). This can be brought about in the variety of ways mentioned in the scriptures through mind control, which frees consciousness from all thoughts and keeps it pure. Effort is necessary. In fact effort is itself yoga.

* * * * * *

Visitor: I am taught that Mantra *Japam* is very potent in practice.

Bhagavan: The Self is the greatest of all mantras and goes on automatically and eternally. If you are not aware of this internal mantra, you should take to it consciously as *japam*, which is attended with effort, to ward off all other thoughts. By constant attention to it, you will eventually become aware of the internal mantra, which is the state of Realization and is effortless. Firmness in this awareness will keep you continually and effortlessly in the current, however much you may be engaged in other activities. Listening to Vedic chanting and mantras has the same result as conscious repetitions of *japam* — its rhythm is the *japam*.

* * * * * *

Visitor: As far as I can see it, it is impossible to realize the Self until one has completely succeeded in preventing the rushing thoughts. Am I right?

Bhagavan: Not exactly. You do not need to prevent other thoughts. In deep sleep you are entirely free from thoughts, because the 'I-thought' is absent. The moment the 'I-thought' rises on waking, all other thoughts rush out spontaneously. The wisest thing for one to do is therefore to catch hold of this leading thought, the 'I-thought', and dissect it — who and what it is — giving thereby no chance to other thoughts to distract one. There lies the true value of the vichara and its efficacy in mind control.

—from *Guru Ramana*, Chapt. XI, Meditation

The *MAHARSHI* is a free bimonthly newsletter edited by Dennis Hartel and Dr. Anil Sharma and distributed in North America by Arunachala Ashrama, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center. For those with Internet access, this issue and all back issues are available at "http://www.ramana-maharshi.org/publish/newslet2.htm".

Books, videos and audio CD and tapes on Sri Ramana Maharshi can also be found on the Internet at "http//www.arunachala.org".

Abhishiktananda

Abhishiktananda (Dom Henri Le Saux), a French Bene-dictine monk, was also a Indian *sannyasin*. He settled in India in 1948, met Sri Ramana Maharshi and was very impressed by him and the Arunachala Mountain. He lived for months in the caves of Arunachala and felt very much drawn to the hill.

Below is one of the beautiful poems he wrote in praise of Sri Arunachala,

11.11.1956

I will sing a song for my Beloved
my Lord Arunachala
with the words that He himself drew from my heart
in his own heart.

I will plaid a garland of flowers
for my Beloved Shiva Arunachala
with flowers that he Himself plucked in the
garden of my heart
in his own heart.

I will thread pearls
to adorn thy neck, O my Beloved
with the pearls which diving down thou thyself
didst discover
in the ocean of my heart,
in the depth of Thy heart.

I will mix thee a balm
for thine ebony locks, O my Beloved
adorned by the crescent moon
with the choice perfumes that Thou thyself didst distill
in the flower of my heart
in the depth of Thy heart.

And I will sprinkle on Thy feet the lustral water
O my Beloved
from the Spring that Thou Thyself hast caused to well up
in the very depth of my heart
from Thy own heart.
And I will wave before Thee the blazing flame
which Thou Thyself didst light in my breast
at Arunachala
in the depth of Thyself.

And I will burn myself up like the incense
that I offer before Thee
having come from Thee, having passed into Thee,
nothing but Thyself alone,
O Arunachala.

And I have ashes too, very white ashes
to mark Thy forehead and Thy breast
and Thy shoulders and Thy arms
with the three mystic lines.

Ashes, O my Arunachala
which are what is left of the heart
where Thou thyself hast burned
as a devouring flame,
O Arunachala!

(Abhishiktananda: *Ascent to the Depth of the Heart: Spiritual Diary 1948-1973*, p. 159
Published by the Abhishiktananda Society, 1998, Delhi

Please Join Us

For the 122nd Jayanti
of
Sri Ramana Maharshi
celebrated in the New York
Arunachala Ashrama
on
Sunday, January 6, 2002
The program will begin at
11:00 A.M.
for more information, please call
(718) 575-3215

Arunachala Pancharatnam

(Five Verses in Praise of Arunachala)

Introduced and translated by Dr. Anil K. Sharma

Sri Bhagavan's adoration of Arunachala is preserved in inspired outpourings of rapturous praise that form the work *Arunachala Stuti Panchakam.* Included in this work is "Arunachala Pancharatnam," a set of five verses in praise of the Holy Hill.

Bhagavan composed these verses at the request of Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni, a beloved disciple of rare humility, scholarship and devotion.

One day in the year 1917, the Muni asked Bhagavan to compose a poem in Sanskrit. Bhagavan smiled, stating that he had no knowledge of Sanskrit grammar or meter and therefore would be unable to do so.[1]

Then Ganapati Muni explained the essentials of prosody and a Sanskrit meter called *arya,* and again repeated his request. By the evening, Sri Bhagavan offered to the Muni, and to the world at large, the completed poem, an exquisite encapsulation of the essence of Advaita Vedanta.

In the year 1922, the work was translated into Tamil *venba* meter by Sri Bhagavan himself, and a concluding verse was added by Bhagavan's devotee, Sri Daivarata.

Bhagavan's own words regarding this work are worth repeating:

"The sun illumines the universe, whereas the Sun of Arunachala is so dazzling that the universe is obscured and an unbroken brilliance remains. But it is not realized in the present state and can be realized only if the lotus of the Heart blossoms. The ordinary lotus blossoms in the light of the visible sun, whereas the subtle Heart blossoms only before the Sun of Suns. May Arunachala make my heart blossom so that His unbroken brilliance may shine all alone!" [2]

The following is a word-by-word translation of Arunachala Pancharatnam. It is transliterated to allow devotees who do not know the Devanagri script to follow Sri Bhagavan's divine utterances. The hymn can be heard on the *Sanskrit Hymns from Sri Ramanasramam* CD, sung by Sri J. Jayaraman and Sri Lingeswara Rao, who give a heart-felt rendition, and also in the *Morning Veda Parayana*, following "Forty Verses in Praise of Sri Ramana."

It is hoped that this translation will convey at least a portion of the joy of the incomparable original.

karuṇāpūrṇasudhābdhe kabalitaghanaviśvarūpa kiraṇāvalyā|
aruṇācala paramātman aruṇo bhava citta kañjasuvikāsāya||1||

karuṇā compassion	*viśvarūpa* form of the universe	*aruṇaḥ* sun
pūrṇa full, *sudhā* nectar	*kiraṇaḥ* ray of light.	*bhava* be (you)
abdhe O ocean	*āvalyā* by successive	*citta* heart, *kañjaḥ* lotus
kavalita eaten, swallowed	*aruṇācala* O Arunachala	*suvikāsāya* cause to
ghana complete, full	*paramātman* Supreme Self	bloom, open

O Ocean of necatar, full of compassion! Swallowing the entire universe with successive rays of light! O Arunachala, the supreme Self, be the Sun and cause my Heart-lotus to bloom! (1)

tvayyaruṇācala sarvaṁ bhūtvā sthitvā pralīnametaccitram|
hṛdyahamityātmatayā nṛtyasi bhoste vadanti hṛdayaṁ nāma||2||

tvayi in you	*pralīnam* is dissolved	*nṛtyasi* you dance
aruṇācala O Arunachala	etat this, *citraṁ* picture	*bhoḥ* O!, *te* your
sarvaṁ all	*hṛdi* in the heart	*vadanti* they say (the wise ones)
bhūtvā having become	*aham iti* as "I"	*hṛdayam* Heart,
sthitvā having been established	*ātmatayā* as the Self	*nāma* name (is)

In you Arunachala, all this picture (of the universe) has come into being, has been established and is dissolved. In the Heart you dance, as "I", as the Self. O! Heart is thy name, the wise ones say. (2)

[1] *Arunachala Siva*, by T.M.P. Mahadevan, p. 89, pub. Sri Ramanasramam, 2000.

[2] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi,* No. 442.

ahamiti kuta āyātītyanviśyāntaḥ praviṣṭayā'tyamaladhiyā|
avagamyaṃ svaṃ rūpaṃ śāmyatyaruṇācala tvayi nadīvābdhau||3||

aham iti "I"	*praviṣṭayā* with inward-turned	*aruṇācala* O Arunachala
kutaḥ from where	*ati amala dhiyā* with pure mind	*tvayi* in you
āyāti comes, arises	*avagamya* having understood	*nadi* a river
iti thus	*svaṃ rūpaṃ* own form	*iva* like
anviśya antaḥ searching inside	*śāmyati* becomes peaceful, calm	*abdhau* in ocean

Searching with inward-turned and pure mind, as to where from this "I" arises, he realizes his own form, and becomes peaceful in Thee, Arunachala, like a river in the ocean. (3)

tyaktvā viṣayaṃ bāhyaṃ ruddhaprāṇena ruddhamanasā'ntastvām|
dhyāyaṃpaśyati yogī dīdhitimaruṇācala tvayi mahīyaṃte||4||

tyaktvā having abandoned	*antaḥ* inside	*yogī* yogi
viṣayaṃ worldly matters, affairs	*tvāṃ* you	*dīdhitiṃ* ray of light
bāhyaṃ outer	*dhyāyaṃ* meditating	*aruṇācala* O Arunachala
ruddhaprāṇena with breath restrained	*paśyati* he sees	*tvayi* in you
ruddhamanasā with mind restrained		*mahīyaṃte* finds delight

Having abandoned external matters, with breath and mind restrained, meditating on you O Arunachala, the yogi sees the Holy Light and finds his delight in Thee! (4)

tvyyarpitamanasā tvāṃ paśyansarvaṃ tavākṛtitayā satatam|
bhajate'nanyaprītyā sa jayatyaruṇācala tvayi sukhe magnaḥ||5||

tvayi in, to you	*tava* your	*sa* he
arpita manasā with mind offered	*akṛtitayā* form	*jayati* conquers
tvāṃ to you	*satatam* always	*aruṇācala* O arunachala
paśyan seeing	*bhajate* he loves	*tvayi* in you, *sukhe* in bliss
sarvaṃ all	*ananya prītyā* with love for no other	*magnaḥ* is immersed

With mind offered to you, seeing all as your form always, loving no other, he conquers, O Arunachala, and is immersed in bliss in Thee. (5)

śrīmad ramaṇamaharṣer darśanam aruṇācalasya devagirā|
pañcakam āryāgītau ratnaṃ tvidam aupaniṣadaṃ hi||

śrīmad Sri	*deva girā* language of the Gods	*tu idam* this
ramaṇamaharṣeḥ Ramana Maharshi's	*pañcakam* five	*aupaniṣadam* contains the
darśanaṃ vision	*āryā gītau* in aarya meter	essence of the upanishads
aruṇācalasya of Arunachala	*ratnam* jewel	*hi* indeed

This is Sri Ramana Maharshi's vision of Arunachala in the language of the Gods. It is a jewel of five verses in Arya meter, and indeed contains the essence of the Upanishads.

Letters and Comments

Why Arunachala?

For the past one year I have been keenly reading about Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi and his teaching on the Internet and from the books as well.

I was wondering why Bhagavan had given so much importance to the Arunachala Hill. Being a *Jnani* he should have shown indifference to all worldly manifestations. By worshipping, praising, doing *Girivalam*, etc., what does a *Jnani* gain? Is this not duality or am I missing some points? Can someone please comment on this?

The same question was put directly to Sri Ramana Maharshi by a Muslim Professor, Dr. Syed. I will let Bhagavan speak for himself in the following quote extracted from the Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi:

273. Dr. Syed asked: I have been reading the Five Hymns. I find that the hymns are addressed to Arunachala by you. You are an Advaitin. How do you then address God as a separate Being?

M.: The devotee, God and the Hymns are all the Self.

D.: But you are addressing God. You are specifying this Arunachala Hill as God.

M.: You can identify the Self with the body. Should not the devotee identify the Self with Arunachala?

D.: If Arunachala be the Self why should it be specially picked out among so many other hills? God is everywhere. Why do you specify Him as Arunachala?

M.: What has attracted you from Allahabad to this place? What has attracted all these people around?

D.: Sri Bhagavan.

M.: How was I attracted here? By Arunachala. The Power cannot be denied. Again, Arunachala is within and not without. The Self is Arunachala.

Also a devotee walking with the Maharshi up on the Hill heard him say: "Someone has written from abroad asking for a stone from the holiest part of the Hill. He does not know that the whole Hill is sacred. It is Siva Himself. Just as we identify ourselves with a body, so Siva has chosen to identify with the Hill. Arunachala is pure Awareness in the form of a Hill. It is out of compassion to those who seek Him that He has chosen to reveal Himself in the form of a Hill visible to the eye. The seeker will obtain guidance and solace by staying near this Hill."

What a Jnani does is only for the sake of others. He is always showing us the way to final emancipation by his actions, words, deeds and even more so in his silence. That is why to study his life is a potent teaching in itself. *Editor*

Finding Harmony

How come the mind is still so confused and is not in harmony. Bhagavan will say, "ask who is feeling disharmony." But there is no heart in it sometimes.

Devotee from Maryland

Regular spiritual practice is necessary. Set some time aside, early morning and evening, for meditation. Follow this by a short reading of Bhagavan's life and teachings. During this period try to connect with the stream of peace always flowing within. If it does not come, entreat Bhagavan for it.

No one succeeds without the effort of deliberate meditation. Our life's aim has to be turned in that direction. Do your duties, but keep your lakshya (aim) on the spiritual ideal. In time, with perseverance, everything will fall into place.

Editor

Prison House of Shame

I found the following statements in an old notebook, but I do not know the source. Are these the words of Sri Ramana?

"Remain fully established in the equanimity of the Self for a long time. Cease the perception of division through perception of Self everywhere, by resolutely turning away from the pursuit of pleasure, and by resolutely breaking down the prison house of shame (false dignity)."

If they are the words of Sri Ramana, I would like to know from where they have been taken so I can read their entire context. I would also appreciate your comments about shame being explained as

false dignity.

Seeker, USA

Although the above quote contains some elements of Sri Ramana Maharshi's teachings, it is definitely not a quote from his writings or recorded conversations.

As for "Remain fully established in the equanimity of the Self for a long time." Maharshi would have left out of the sentence "for a long time."

The Maharshi did not isolate "shame" as "prison house." In his teachings he emphasizes only one prison house and that is of the ego. To realize that we are the immortal Self and not the ego or the mind is the real release from prison. He did not dwell on our weaknesses, whatever they may be, but always attempted to turn our attention to the indwelling truth of our true Being. *Editor*

Clarify Some Doubts

Could you please clarify some doubts I have.

1. The Maharshi says in *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*: "There are only two ways, either holding on to the root-thought 'I' or unconditional self-surrender to the Higher Power...The thoughts are eliminated by holding on to the root thought 'I'."

In P. Brunton's *In Quest of the Overself*, he writes: "This effort to survey the self-thought is an impossible one, like trying to catch ones own shadow."

What is practical at this point when witnessing this blank in meditation?

2. All notion and effort to surrender seems to stem from a false assumption by this ego, that it possess something tangible to offer-up or surrender, which in fact has been the Lord's all along to begin with.

3. By asking all these questions, it is my endless elusion that if I can add just one more feather to my wing of knowledge I can really soar higher, but always end up realizing that it is the weight of those feathers that's holding me down.

Seeker, USA

Answer to No 1: *Continue reading and reflecting on Bhagavan's teachings. Other's interpretations are not so relevant, or may not even be correct. The 'I' (the limited ego) does not catch hold of the infinite 'I' (the Self). It can never do this. It is a projection of the Self. What happens in the enquiry is that the limited 'I' vanishes in the quest for the Infinite 'I', like the stick used to turn the fire ends up being consumed by the fire itself. When witnessing the "blank" hold on to the witness alone, let all other thoughts go.*

Answer to No 2: *If you have no doubt that the ego is only a "false assumption" and you are firmly established in the belief that 'all is the Lord's only,' you could not even ascribe to yourself an ego to ask this question, let alone offer your possessions, etc. Until this total surrender is achieved, effort is necessary.*

Answer to No 3: *Bhagavan has said there will always be doubts until the doubter and its source is found. We have no choice but to continue the practice of hearing the truth, reflecting on it, and contemplating until we become established in It. That is the only way.* *Editor*

Ramana Satsangs

Satsangs with recitations, songs and meditation have been going on in a few places near large cities. Some of them are weekly, others monthly. If you would like to attend any of these and meet followers of Sri Ramana Maharshi in your area, please call or write for more information.

Boston Area — David & Anna Klegon (617-928-1487 /dklegon@rcn.com)
Detroit, Ann Arbor Area — Prashanth & Shobana (734-327-0109 / prashvis@hotmail.com)
Atlanta, GA Area — Mangalam Kalyanam (706-846-5620 / smoothcutter@hotmail.com)
Washington, D.C. Area — Prakash & Mamtha Adiseshan (703-502-4892 / adiseshan@worldnet.att.net)
Miami, Ft. Lauderdale Area — David & Janet Rubinson (954-755-4758 /Arunahill@aol.com)